



April-May
2021



193 Thomas Heights Rd
Franklin, N.C. 28734
828-349 2046
macon.ces.ncsu.edu

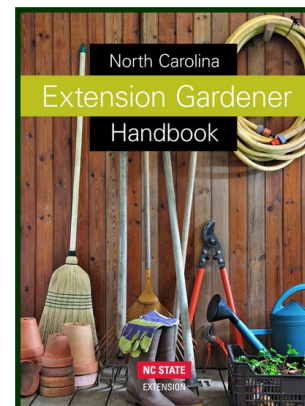
Home Gardening Newsletter

Upcoming Horticulture Programs

Upcoming Master Gardener Program

The NC Cooperative Extension Service is now taking applications for participation in the 2021 Macon County Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Classes will be held at the Environmental Resource Center in Franklin N.C. every Wednesday morning for 9-10 weeks from 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. beginning tentatively May 5th. Application deadline is Wednesday April 28th. The course fee will be around \$100 which includes an outstanding book along with weekly handouts (bring a flash drive). Upon receipt and review of your application, look for an acceptance letter with more details.

As a class participant you will receive 35 hours of training in subjects including: bulbs, vegetables, fruits, herbs, berries, pruning, grafting, native plants, organic gardening, disease and much more! After successfully completing your training, passing a take home exam, and returning a like number of hours in volunteer service you will be certified as a Master Gardener.



Classes will be held indoors. Social distancing and masks will be required. For an application and more information on this program contact Christy Bredenkamp at the Macon County Extension Center 828 349 2049 or e-mail clbreden@ncsu.edu

Organic Gardening Prevention and Control Strategies

N.C. Cooperative Extension will be holding an in-depth Organic Pest Management Seminar for gardeners who desire to learn more on how to control (organically) insects, diseases, and weeds that plague their vegetables. This program will be held on Monday, May 31, 2021, from 6-8 p.m. online via Zoom.

This seminar (free) will cover a whirlwind of topics such as companion plants, farmscaping, soil amendments, organically approved sprays, a plethora of tips, and more. Participants will receive plenty of handouts (online), ask questions, and enjoy a great presentation. You won't want to miss it! For more information go to

www.macon.ces.ncsu



Building a Blueberry Patch

In North Carolina, farming cultivated blueberries is a flourishing industry ranking 6th in the nation for harvested acres (2019). Wholesale farms in the Bladen, Pender and neighboring county areas along with “pick-your-own” farms throughout N.C. produce approximately 36 million pounds on 8,700 acres with a value of roughly \$60.8 million per year.

Blueberries are native to North America. Explorers such as Samuel de Champlain in 1615 made note of observing Native Americans harvesting wild blueberries along Lake Huron. Today, tourists and locals may be spotted harvesting wild blueberries along the Blue Ridge Parkway and other mountain roads and trails. Enthusiasts who love making blueberry pancakes, smoothies, cobblers and other yummy edibles will find their precious ingredients in the fresh or frozen sections of local grocery stores, at farmers markets, or a gardeners own backyard.

If you desire to do the later, blueberries are relatively easy to grow with east to do steps and a few modifications. Fans of this delicious berry may choose to grow from a wide assortment of Highbush or Rabbiteye cultivars.

Site Selection and Planting - Transplant plants in full sun for best production. Blueberry plants will tolerate up to 50 percent shade but yields will lessen as shade increases. For an average sized family, 10 shrubs will provide an adequate supply for fresh use with excess for freezing and making jelly or jam. Cross-pollination is critical with Rabbiteye blueberries therefore plant two or more varieties within 100 feet of each planting. Space Rabbiteye Blueberry plants six (6) feet apart in the row with the rows ten (10) feet apart. Space Highbush blueberry plants every five (5) feet in the row and eight (8) feet between rows.



Choosing Cultivars - There are two points to consider when choosing the right cultivars for your patch. The first is elevation and the second is susceptibility to mummy berry. If your elevation is above 2500 ft., then choose Highbush types as they will consistently survive winter temperatures below 10 degrees F. If your elevation is below 2500 ft. then both Highbush and Rabbiteye cultivars will do. The second point is in knowing which cultivars are susceptible to the fungal disease mummy berry. This disease infects the emerging shoots followed by the flowers and later manifesting with “mummy like berries” before harvest.

The following list is based on field observations.

Rabbiteye cultivars (below 2500 ft. elevation) that seem less susceptible to mummy berry include "Powderblue", "Columbus" and "Onslow," "Centurion" and "Premier".

Rabbiteye cultivars that are highly susceptible to mummy berry include "Tifblue" and "Brightwell".

Highbush cultivars (grow below and above 2500 ft. elevation), that seem less susceptible to mummy berry are "Duke" and "Elliott."

Soil Preparation - Blueberries require an acidic soil with a pH of 5.3 or lower (pH range of 4.0 to 5.3). Typically, pH levels in garden and pasture soils range from 5.5 to 6.5. If the soil pH is high, add either ammonium sulfate or sulfur based on soil test results. When it's time to transplant, ensure planting the roots at the same level observed in the nursery or in the container. Blueberries prefer a soil with a high organic matter content, therefore incorporating materials such as pine bark, aged pine sawdust or rotted wood chips, will promote better root growth and ensure better plant survival. Mulching after planting results in uniform soil moisture, reduces soil temperatures, and promotes better plant growth.

Continued on pg. 4

April Horticulture Tips

Lawns

- Do not fertilize cool season lawns between April through August
- If broadleaf weeds are present, pull them while they are small or spot treat with a broadleaf herbicide.
- Mow Fescue and bluegrass lawns at 3 inches.



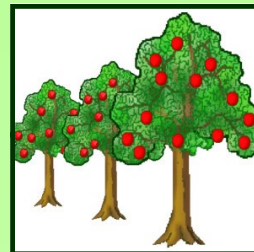
Vegetables

- Break up soil in garden beds when soil is dry enough.
- Turn under cover crop when soil is not too wet.
- Plant asparagus crowns, radishes and potatoes.
- Sow seeds for beets, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, radishes, spinach and Swiss chard.
- Transplant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and kale.
- Plant potatoes about the time that dandelions bloom.
- Start transplants for warm season vegetables indoors. Do not plant frost-sensitive plants outside until May.
- Spray broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower for worms if needed with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).
- Cut back perennial herbs to keep them compact.
- Keep last frost date in mind. May 15 is average for Macon County - what should we put here? The actual last frost date will fluctuate depending on your elevation and the weather.



Fruits

- Prune out fire blight in pear and apple trees. Sterilize pruners in a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water after each cut. Spray streptomycin on apple and pear varieties susceptible for fire blight.
- Check fruit trees for winter damage and prune dead or weakened wood.
- Fertilize fruits if not done last month.
- Mulch berries and fruit trees (4 inches in a 2-ft in diameter)



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Plant trees, shrubs and ground covers.
- Side-dress trees, shrubs and ground covers with compost.
- Mulch trees and shrubs, and perennial beds after removing weeds.
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after the flowers fade.
- Watch for azalea lace bugs, boxwood leafminer, euonymus scale. Spray if needed.
- Work a 2-3 inch layer of compost into the soil to improve drainage in flower beds. Plant flowering perennials and ground covers.
- Divide or transplant perennials and herbs when growth is 3-4 inches high.
- If rose varieties are not disease resistant, start weekly fungicide sprays to prevent black spot. Continue spray program through October. Consider replacing disease-prone varieties with disease-resistant types.



Building a Blueberry Patch continued

Fertilization - If possible take a soil sample prior to setting out the plants. Knowing your soil pH and soil phosphate levels is extremely important. If using manures mix in the soil when transplanting. If using conventional fertilizers, wait until the first leaves have reached full size, then, apply 1 level Tablespoon of 10-10-10 for each year of the plant (i.e. a 2 year old bush gets 2 Tablespoons). Apply in a circle 1 foot in diameter around each blueberry bush. Gradually increase the fertilizer each year.

Harvesting - Blueberry fruit ripens approximately two months after blooming, although harvest time depends on the variety, weather conditions, and plant vigor. Harvesting Highbush can begin in late June and continue into October with late blooming Rabbiteye types.

Final Suggestions – When setting out new plants, remove all of the flower buds during the first growing season. In year two, remove weak shoots and attempt to keep four main upright canes. Some flower buds may be kept to produce fruit in year two if the bush put on vigorous growth the previous year. Blueberry shrubs may be allowed to produce a full crop starting the third growing season. Maintain a weed and grass free zone around each plant if possible.

For more information on starting, pruning & maintaining your blueberry patch contact the Macon County Extension Center at 828 349 2049.

Christy Bredenkamp,
Macon County Extension Director



Page 4